

Yet another primary is coming, and while no one knows if Barack Obama or Hillary Rodham Clinton will win, one thing we do know with absolute certainty is that Indiana and North Carolina voters will be overwhelmed with campaign advertisements and barraged by robocalls.

**Recently, a bicameral and bipartisan effort has been led by Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Reps. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.) and John Campbell (R-Calif.)** with the introduction of the Robocall Privacy Act. The bill would sanction groups or individuals who make political robocalls between the hours of 9 p.m. and 8 a.m., make more than two political robocalls to the same number in the same day, fail to disclose the party responsible for the political robocall or block caller identification information.

While many American voters might believe the Robocall Privacy Act would provide relief in advance of the primaries or the November general election, they will likely never have a chance to find out. The cold truth is that these bills will more than likely get buried in committee, where they now reside.

Death in committee is the typical end for robocall regulatory bills across the nation at the state and federal levels. In March, South Carolina state Sen. Larry Martin (R) introduced robocall legislation to much press attention, only to have the bill killed the next day.

Why? Lawmakers who opposed the bill cited the right to free speech and the right to use any legal means necessary to emerge victorious in a campaign. Indeed, South Carolina Republican Party Executive Director Jay Ragley said, "We're here to win elections." A law limiting robocalling "takes a tool out of our hands."

But does this tool work?

When I testified in front of the U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration in February, Sen. Bob Bennett (R-Utah) asked why on earth politicians would make robocalls when they know they do nothing but frustrate and alienate voters.

Why indeed.

Every day, I talk to robocall consultants, campaign operatives and candidates. I ask them to show me the money — provide data that proves robocalls work.

Their responses are similar almost every time:

“We do them because they are cheap.”

“We do them because the other guy is doing them.”

“We do them because we can.”

Not once have these campaign professionals provided evidence that robocalls work by persuading voters to vote for a candidate or by getting voters to the polls.

A 2004 study, updated in 2008, by Yale political scientists Donald Green and Alan Gerber found not one shred of evidence that robocalls work.

At the voluntary National Political Do Not Contact Registry, our members report receiving 10 to 15 robocalls each day during election season. Babies are woken from naps. Night shift workers who sleep during the day are not able to get the rest they need to be productive. Seniors live in fear of a health emergency occurring while their phone line is tied up with yet another robocall.

A member wrote to us recently: “My 85-year-old mother, who had a stroke, is sometimes at home alone, and when these phone calls come in, it confuses her and gets her upset when someone doesn’t listen to her. She doesn’t understand that it is an automated call.”

And according to North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper, a cancer patient with a telephone lifeline device was unable to call out when robocalls came.

Politicians must listen to their constituents and put an end to this invasion of privacy. If politicians were interested in doing the right thing, they would simply agree to voluntarily abide by the wishes of those Americans who have registered their telephone numbers on the federal Do Not Call list or equivalent state lists that forbid telemarketers from calling them.

Should robocalls be banned? We don't think so. As Michael Darner wrote in Politico ( <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0308/9281.html> ) recently, "The Supreme Court has held that the First Amendment serves the cause of self-governance by ensuring that debate on public issues is 'uninhibited, robust and wide-open.'"

Our solution does not trample the First Amendment: The bipartisan and nonprofit National Political Do Not Contact Registry, located at [www.StopPoliticalCalls.org](http://www.StopPoliticalCalls.org) , asks politicians and parties to voluntarily agree not to contact voters who have added their names to the registry and would like to opt out of receiving such calls.

By signing up, our more than 50,000 members have sent a message to America's politicians: "Don't call us; we'll call you."

And voters are starting to get some relief from pernicious political robocalls — at least in parts of North Carolina and Kansas. Reps. Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.) and Nancy Boyda (D-Kan.) are the first two politicians in the nation to take the "do not robocall" pledge.

More incredible is the news that one of the leading Democratic robocalling firms, Democratic Dialing, has joined with the NPDNC Registry and taken the pledge.

As Democratic Dialing CEO Rick Gilmore said: "It does our clients no good to call voters who are only annoyed by receiving robocalls. In fact, it often does more harm than good."

Please do not call them; thank them.

Shaun Dakin is CEO of Citizens for Civil Discourse, a nonpartisan, nonprofit group that recently launched the National Political Do Not Contact Registry.